

Marine Safety Newsletter

U.S. Coast Guard Marine Safety and Environmental Protection Directorate

The USCG's Internal and External Risk Management

"Managing risk is what we do." With those six words the Commandant, ADM James M. Loy, summed up the U.S. Coast Guard's mission during the fall 1999 Flag Conference. The Coast Guard is the nation's maritime risk manager; many of its decisions in the marine safety field deal with risk management issues. Routinely, attempts must be made to identify what can go wrong; how likely and bad it can be; and what can be done to address it. This is accomplished through the steps of hazard identification, risk assessment and risk management.

In November 1999, the Human Resources Directorate released an instruction (COMDTINST 3500.3) on Operational Risk Management (ORM) which focuses on *internal* CG Risk Management associated with unit operations. This year, the Marine Safety and Environmental Protection Directorate will release a COMDTINST on Risk-Based Decision-Making (RBDM) that will apply these same principles to the more diverse, *external* marine environment. While the principles are the same for both, the perspectives and applications differ.

ORM focuses on *internal* risks that arise from unit operations, primarily the health and safety of CG personnel and property. ORM is a valuable instruction that features basic models, tools and checklists that concentrate primarily on tactical situations and CG missions and activities. It uses a small set of models and tools that are simple to apply. Additionally, ORM tools and models are used to answer risk questions that generally are not likely to be subjected to close public scrutiny.

Conversely, the forthcoming RBDM COMDTINST will emphasize the *external* maritime industry. Published along with the RBDM COMDTINST will be a set of tools, called the RBDM Guidelines, which may be used to aid decision-makers in answering risk questions. The tools are dynamic and can handle a wide range of issues and problems. The RBDM instruction will task units that have marine safety responsibilities with integrating RBDM methods into their day-to-day operations and activities. The RBDM Guidelines provide tools that span from ▼

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The *Marine Safety Newsletter* is published by the USCG Marine Safety and Environmental Protection Directorate to collect and disseminate information of general interest to the maritime community. The monthly newsletter prints abstracts of major USCG rulemakings, studies, special projects, and related events. Articles from non-Coast Guard sources may not represent USCG policy or views.

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www.uscg.mil/hq/g-m/gmhome.htm

January 2001



▲ the very simple to the more complex. The guidelines include tools to address prevention, preparedness, and response issues. This broader perspective includes CG risks and considers external risks to the general public and environment. The RBDM tools will also help you make decisions that are supportable and defensible. The more thorough consideration provided by the RBDM tools may be needed in controversial issues, where public interest is high or the decision may be subjected to greater scrutiny.

Applying ORM or RBDM is not necessarily an either/or choice. The complexity of marine safety issues and the number of parties can preclude the application of ORM tools. Nevertheless, there may be circumstances, especially related to tactical issues such as response operations, where ORM is applicable. In selecting ORM tools, you must consider whether they yield adequate information and support for the decision to be made. At other times, some *internal* risk management questions may require a deeper, more thorough analysis that can not be achieved by ORM. In these situations, the RBDM tools are likely to provide the appropriate approach. A guiding philosophy of risk management is to perform the *minimum analysis* that will generate *adequate information* for the decision-maker's needs.

The two programs (ORM and RBDM) are neither redundant nor competing – they complement each other. Where ORM helps manage internal risk, the RBDM Guidelines are intended for external applications, thus providing the USCG with a full set of tools and methods to manage the entire risk spectrum. For additional information on the RBDM Guidelines contact CDR Tim Close in G-MSE-1 or visit the new Risk Website at www.uscg.mil/hq/g-m/risk.

USCG to Learn Crowd Control

U.S. Coast Guard crews soon may be equipped with self-protection gear, non-lethal weapons and crowd control tactics in order to more safely combat potentially violent migrants attempting to enter U.S. waters. The Coast Guard is cooperating with military units to gain helpful tips and access to non-lethal weapons,

but will then need to learn how to adapt the equipment and lessons for use on the water. A new Coast Guard task force, Project Ericson, has spearheaded the movement.



A USCG Caution:

As lakes and rivers freeze, their icy tops may seem welcoming for play and fishing. However, precautions must be taken to prevent drowning, hypothermia or serious injury. A minimum thickness of two inches of ice is needed to support one person, four inches to support two men, five inches to hold a snowmobile, eight inches to support a car, and 10 to 12 inches to support a light truck. Ice does not form or maintain the same thickness throughout, and an ice sheet could vary from 12 inches to one inch within a distance of 10 feet. Hypothermia can set in as soon as a person's core temperature drops below 95 degrees. For more information call the Ninth Coast Guard District Public Affairs office at (216) 902-6020.



Free DSC Radio Registration

BoatU.S. officials announced in December they will issue free identification numbers for marine radios with digital selective calling to boaters who want to use this safety method. Previously, boaters who wanted identification numbers had to pay \$120 for an FCC license.

DSC is part of the global transition in maritime distress communications from voice calls (on channel 16) to digital communication. The major advantage of a DSC is its ability to send an automatic mayday call, which identifies the vessel, as well as gives its location when the radio is connected to a Loran or GPS. Should the skipper become disabled, a DSC radio will continue sending a mayday. A DSC radio also allows boaters and commercial vessels to make a private radio call – with an MMSI number – to another DSC-equipped vessel. Only the radio number called will receive the transmission.

To register for an identification number, boaters may visit BoatUS.com and click on "MMSI." Once the registration form is accepted, their MMSI numbers will be issued electronically. Boaters may also Email BoatU.S. at MMSI@BoatUS.com. To ask questions or receive a registration form, call (800) 563-1536. Completed forms may be faxed to BoatU.S. at (703) 461-2840, or mailed to the BoatU.S. MMSI program at 880 S. Pickett St., Alexandria, VA 22304.